

George Washington Papers, Series 2, Letterbooks 1754-1799

To THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

New York, June 8, 1789.

Sir: Although in the present unsettled state of the Executive Departments, under the government of the Union, I do not conceive it expedient to call upon you for information officially; yet I have supposed that some informal communications from the Office of foreign Affairs might neither be improper or unprofitable. For finding myself at this moment less occupied with the duties of my office than I shall probably be at almost any time hereafter; I am desirous of employing myself in obtaining an acquaintance with the real situation of the several great Departments, at the period of my acceding to the administration of the general Government. For this purpose I wish to receive in writing such a clear account of the Department, at the head of which you have been for some years past, as may be sufficient (without overburdening or confusing the mind which has very many objects to claim its attention at the same instant) to impress me with a full, precise, and distinct *general idea* of the affairs of the United States, so far as they are comprehended in, or connected with that Department.

As I am now at leisure to inspect such Papers and Documents as may be necessary to be acted upon hereafter, or as may be calculated to give me an insight into the business and duties of that Department I have thought fit to address this notification to your accordingly?
30 I am &c.31

30. This same letter was sent to the Acting Secretary at War and the Board of Treasury, which, with the Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs, were officers holding over from the Continental Congress. No replies are now found in the *Washington Papers*; but among

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the undated manuscripts at the end of the year 1789 are memoranda in Washington's writing headed as follows: "Negotiation with Spain" (13 pp.); "From Mr. Swan's Report" (3 pp.), and "Boundary of Sales of Georgia" to various land companies (2 pp.); "Board of Treasury" (5 pp.): all of which seem to have been compiled from the now missing replies, The great departments of the Government under the Constitution were not created until September, 1789, although the Department of Foreign Affairs was created by the Act of Congress of July 27, 1789. Its name was subsequently changed to that of the Department of State and its head thereafter called the Secretary of State by the Act of Sept. 15, 1789.

On June 8 a letter to the same purport as this one to the Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs was sent to the Acting Postmaster General, whose department was temporarily established by the act of Sept. 22, 1789, and permanently fixed by the act of Feb. 20, 1792.

31. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*.

TO THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

New York, July 14, 1789.

Dear Sir: I find myself incompetent to form any decided opinion upon the paper I received from you the other day without having a view of the transactions which have been had with the Spanish Minister.

I wish also to know whether, if the negotiations are renewed, it can be made to appear from anything that that Gentleman has said, as the result of an advance towards it from him, in his official character? Unless this is the case, and prima facie the reverse, will it not convey to him and his court an idea that a change of sentiment has taken place in the governing powers of this country? Will it be expedient and proper for the President (at this moment) to encourage such an idea? at any rate without previously advising with the Senate? With very sincere esteem etc.⁴⁸

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48. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*.

To THE KING OF FRANCE

New York, October 9, 1789.

To our great and beloved Friend and Ally, his Most Christian Majesty.

By the change which has taken place in the national government of the United States, the honor of receiving and answering your Majesty's letter of the 7th. of June, to "the President and Members of Congress" has devolved upon me.

The painful event communicated in it, could not fail to affect the sensibility, and excite the regret, of the People of the United States, who have so much reason to feel an interest in whatever concerns the happiness of your Majesty, your family, and Nation. They very sincerely condole with you on the occasion, and are sensible how greatly this misfortune must have been enhanced by those qualities in the Dauphin, which promised to have rendered that Prince a blessing, not only to his family, but to his Nation.

Permit me to assure your Majesty of the unceasing gratitude and attachment of the United States and of our prayers, that the Almighty will be pleased to keep you, our great and beloved Friend and Ally under his constant guidance and protection.⁸³

83. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*.

On October 9 the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in North America sent an address to Washington, the answer to which is undated, but recorded immediately, following the address in the "Letter Book" in the *Washington Papers*. In the answer he stated: "I readily

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join with you that 'while just government protects all in their religious rights, true religion affords to government its surest support.'"

To THE EMPEROR OF MOROCCO

City of New York, December 1, 1789.

Great and Magnanimous Friend: Since the Date of the Letter which the late Congress, by their President, addressed to your Imperial Majesty, the United States of America have thought proper to change their Government, and to institute a new one, agreeable to the Constitution, of which I have the Honor of, herewith, enclosing a Copy. The Time necessarily employed in the arduous Task, and the Derangements occasioned by so great, though peaceable a Revolution, will apologize, and account for your Majesty's not having received those regular Advices, and Marks of Attention, from the United States, which the Friendship and Magnanimity of your Conduct, towards them, afforded Reason to expect.

The United States, having unanimously appointed me to the supreme executive Authority, in this Nation, your Majesty's Letter of the 17th: August 1788 , which

by Reason of the Dissolution of the late Government, remained unanswered, has been delivered to me. I have also received the Letters which your Imperial Majesty has been so kind as to write, in favor of the United States, to the Bashaws of Tunis and Tripoli, and I present to you the sincere Acknowledgments and Thanks of the United States, for this important Mark of your Friendship for them.

We greatly regret that the hostile Disposition of those Regencies, towards this Nation, who have never injured them, is not to be removed, on Terms in our Power to comply with. Within our Territories there are no Mines, either of Gold, or Silver, and this young Nation, just recovering from the Waste and Desolation of a long War, have not, as yet, had Time to acquire Riches by Agriculture and Commerce. But our Soil is boundtiful, and our People

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industrious; and we have Reason to flatter ourselves, that we shall gradually become useful to our Friends.

The Encouragement which your Majesty has been pleased, generously, to give to our Commerce with your Dominions; the

Punctuality with which you have caused the Treaty with us to be observed; and the just and generous Measures taken in the Case of Captain Proctor,⁵² make a deep Impression on the United States, and confirm their Respect for, and Attachment to your Imperial Majesty.

It gives me Pleasure to have this Opportunity of assuring your Majesty that, while I remain at the Head of this Nation, I shall not cease to promote every Measure that may conduce to the Friendship and Harmony, which so happily subsist between your Empire and them, and shall esteem myself happy in every Occasion of convincing your Majesty of the high Sense (which in common with the whole Nation) I entertain of the Magnanimity, Wisdom, and Benevolence of your Majesty. In the Course of the approaching Winter, the national Legislature (which is called by the former Name of Congress) will assemble, and I shall take Care that Nothing be omitted that may be necessary to cause the Correspondence,

52. Apparently some inadvertence, as Thomas Jefferson, writing from Paris (Sept. 9, 1789) to Giuseppe Chiappe, speaks of the release of the schooner *Proctor* by the Emperor. A press copy of this letter is in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

between our Countries, to be maintained and conducted in a Manner agreeable to your Majesty, and satisfactory to all the Parties concerned in it.

May the Almighty bless your Imperial Majesty, our great and magnanimous Friend, with his constant Guidance and Protection.⁵³

53. From a photostat of the original kindly furnished by George A. Ball, of Muncie, Ind.

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On December 1 the New Jersey Legislature sent an address to Washington, whose reply, undated, is recorded in the "Letter Book" immediately following the copy of the address. In the reply Washington wrote: "The opportunities, which were afforded me in the trying vicissitudes of our arduous struggle, to remark the generous spirit, which animated the exertions of your citizens, have impressed a remembrance of their worth, which no length of time or change of circumstances can efface....In making my acknowledgments for the favorable opinions you express of my military conduct, as it respected the observance of civil right, it is but justice to assign great merit to the temper of those citizens, whose estates were more immediately the scene of warfare. Their personal services were rendered without constraint, and the derangement of their affairs submitted to without dissatisfaction. It was the triumph of patriotism over personal considerations. And our present enjoyments of peace and freedom reward the sacrifice."

On December 4 Lear wrote to William Duer, that Washington would "keep the Carriage provided for his use previous to his arrival in New York...as it will be considered upon the same footing with other Articles furnished at that time and for that purpose." Lear's letter is recorded in the "Letter Book" in the *Washington Papers*.

On December 8, or thereabouts, Washington wrote out a memorandum of extracts from the report of the Commissioners appointed to treat with the southern Indians, and extracts of the letters from sundry persons in Kentucky and other parts of the western country, for the purpose of clarifying the Indian situation in his mind. This document, covering 18 folio pages, is in the *Washington Papers*.

To THE KING OF FRANCE

City of New York, April 6, 1790.

Very great and good Friend and Ally: As the time limited for the duration of Mr. Jefferson's residence in quality of our Minister Plenipotentiary near your Majesty will shortly expire,

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and the public interests require that he should undertake other functions, we have directed him to take leave of your Majesty, and to assure you of our friendship and sincere desire to preserve and strengthen the harmony and confidence which so happily subsists between the two nations.

We are persuaded that he will do this in the manner most expressive of these sentiments, and of the respect and sincerity with which they are offered.

We pray God to keep your Majesty under his holy protection.⁵⁸

58. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*.

To THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mount Vernon, March 31, 1791.

Dear Sir: Having been so fortunate as to reconcile the contending interests of Georgetown and Carrollsburg,¹⁶ and to unite them in such an agreement as permits the public purposes to be carried into effect on an extensive and proper scale, I have the pleasure to transmit to you the enclosed proclamation, which, after annexing your counter signature and the seal of the United States, you will cause to be published.

The terms agreed on between me, on the part of the United States, with the Land holders of Georgetown and Carrollsburg are. That all the land from Rock creek along the river to the Eastern-branch and so upwards to or above the Ferry¹⁷ including a breadth of about a mile and a half, the whole containing from three to five thousand acres is ceded to the public, on condition That, when the whole shall be surveyed and laid off as a city, (which Major L'Enfant is now directed to do) the present Proprietors shall retain every other lot; and, for such part of the land as may be taken for public use,

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16. Carrollsburg was bounded by the Eastern Branch, or Anacostia River, and James Creek; it extended as far north as N Street SW.

17. At the foot of Kentucky Avenue SE.

for squares, walks, &ca., they shall be allowed at the rate of Twenty five pounds per acre. The Public having the right to reserve such parts of the wood on the land as may be thought necessary to be preserved for ornament &ca. The Land holders to have the use and profits of all their ground until the city is laid off into lots, and sale is made of those lots which, by this agreement, become public property. No compensation is to be made for the ground that may be occupied as streets or alleys.

To these conditions all the principal Land holders except the purchaser of Slater's property who did not attend have subscribed, and it is not doubted that the few, who were not present, will readily assent thereto; even the obstinate Mr. Burns has come into the measure.

The enlarged plan of this agreement having done away the necessity and indeed postponed the propriety, of designating the particular spot, on which the public buildings should be placed, until an accurate survey and sub-division of the whole ground is made, I have left out that paragraph of the proclamation.

It was found, on running the lines that the comprehension of Bladensburg within the district, must have occasioned the exclusion of more important objects, and, of this I am convinced as well by my observation as Mr. Ellicott's opinion. With great regard and etc.18

18. In the writing of William Jackson in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

PROCLAMATION

Georgetown, March 30, 1791.

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Whereas by a proclamation bearing date the 24th. day of January of this present year, and in pursuance of certain acts of the States of Maryland and Virginia, and of the Congress of the United States therein mentioned, certain lines of experiment were directed to be run in the neighbourhood of Georgetown in Maryland for the purpose of determining the location of a part of the territory of ten miles square for the permanent seat of the government of the United States, and a certain part was directed to be located within the said lines of experiment on both sides of the Potomac, and above the limit of the eastern branch prescribed by the said act of Congress.

And Congress by an amendatory act passed on the third day of the present month of March have given further authority to the President of the U. S. "to make any part of the territory below the said limit, and above the mouth of hunting Creek, a part of the said district, so as to include

a convenient part of the eastern branch, and of the lands lying on the lower side thereof, and also the town of Alexandria."

Now therefore for the purpose of amending and completing the location of the whole of the said territory of the ten miles square in conformity with the said amendatory act of Congress, I do hereby declare and make known that the whole of the said territory shall be located and included within the four lines following, that is to say:

Beginning at Jones's point, the upper cape of Hunting Creek in Virginia, and at an angle in the outset of 45 degrees west of the north: and running in a direct line ten miles for the first line: then beginning again at the same Jones's point, and running another direct line at a right angle with the first across the Potowmack, ten miles for the second line: then from the termination of the said first and second lines running two other direct lines of ten miles each, the one crossing the

eastern branch aforesaid, and the other the Potowmack and meeting each other in a point.

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And I do accordingly direct the Commissioners, named under the authority of the said first mentioned act of Congress, to proceed forthwith to have the said four lines run, and by proper metes and bounds defined and limited, and thereof to make due report under their hands and seals: and the territory so to be located, defined, and limited, shall be the whole territory accepted by the said acts of Congress as the district for the permanent seat of the government of the U. S.¹³

13. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*. A draft of this proclamation, in Jefferson's writing, is in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress, and contains the following, which was not incorporated in the proclamation as issued.

...And Whereas the said first mentioned act of Congress did further enact that the said Commissioners should, under the direction of the President of the U. S. provide suitable buildings for the accommodation of Congress and of the President and for the public offices of the government of the United States, I do hereby further declare and make known, that [the highest summit of lands in the town heretofore called Hamburg, within the said territory, with a convenient extent of grounds circumjacent, shall be appropriated for a Capitol for the accommodation of Congress, and such other lands between Georgetown and the stream heretofore called the Tyber, as shall on due examination be found convenient and sufficient, shall be appropriated for the accommodation of the President of the U. S. for the time being, and for the Public offices of the government of the U. S.]* And I do hereby direct the said Commissioners accordingly.

"In testimony whereof I have caused the seal of the U. S. to be affixed to these presents and signed the same with my hand. Done at Georgetown aforesaid the day of March in the year of our Lord 1791 and of the Independence of the U. S. the fifteenth."

(*The part within brackets being conjectural, will be rendered conformable to the ground when more accurately examined.)

See Washington's letter to the Secretary of State, Mar. 31, 1791, *post*.

To THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mount Vernon, April 4, 1791.

Dear Sir: You will readily agree with me that the best interests of the United States require such an intimation to be made to the Governor of Canada, either directly or indirectly, as may produce instructions to prevent the Indians receiving military aid or supplies from the british posts or garrisons. The notoriety of this assistance has already been such as renders enquiry into particulars unnecessary. Colonel Beckwith seems peculiarly designated to be the channel of an indirect intimation. Referring the mode and extent of communicating with him to your own discretion, I wish it may be suggested in such manner as to reach Lord Dorchester, or the Officer commanding in Canada, that certain information has been received of large supplies of ammunition being delivered to the hostile Indians, from british posts, about the

commencement of last campaign. And, as the United States have no other view in prosecuting the present war against the Indians, than, in the failure of negotiation, to procure, by arms, peace and safety to the inhabitants of their frontier, they are equally surprised and disappointed at such an interference by the servants or subjects of a foreign State, as seems intended to protract the attainment of so just and reasonable an object.

These are my sentiments on this subject at the present moment; yet so unsettled do some circumstances appear that it is possible you may see a necessity either to treat it very delicately or to decline acting on it altogether. The option is therefore left to your judgment as events may make the one or the other the part of propriety. The enclosed paper is transmitted and referred to you in the state I received it. I am &c.43

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43. In the writing of William Jackson in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress. Ford and Sparks date this April 3.

To THE SECRETARIES OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF STATE, TREASURY, AND WAR

Mount Vernon, April 4, 1791.

Gentlemen: As the public service may require that communications should be made to me, during my absence from the seat of government, by the most direct conveyances; and as, in the event of any very extraordinary occurrence, it will be necessary to know at what time I may be found in any particular place, I have to inform you that unless the progress of my journey to Savannah is retarded by unforeseen interruptions it will be regulated (including days of halt) in the following manner. I shall be

on the 8th. of April at Fredericksburg

11th—Richmond

14th—Petersburg

16th—Halifax

18th—Tarborough

20th.—Newbern

24th.—Wilmington

29th.—Georgetown, South-Carolina

2nd of May—Charleston, halting five days.

11th.—Savannah, halting two days.

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Thence, leaving the line of the mail, I shall proceed to Augusta, and, according to the information which I may receive there, my return, by an upper road will be regulated.

The route of my return is at present uncertain, but in all probability, it will be through Columbia, Camden, Charlotte, Salisbury, Salem, Guilford, Hillsborough, Harrisburg, Williamsburg to Taylor's ferry on the Roanoke, and thence to Fredericksburg by the nearest and best road.

After thus explaining to you, as far as I am able at present, the direction and probable progress of my journey, I have to express my wish, if any serious and important cases should arise during my absence, (of which the probability is but too strong) that the Secretaries for the Departments of State, Treasury, and War may hold consultations thereon, to determine whether they are of such a nature as to require my personal attendance at the seat of government; and, if they should be so considered,

I will return immediately from any place at which the information may reach me. Or should they determine that measures, relevant to the case, may be legally and properly pursued without the immediate agency of the President, I will approve and ratify the measures, which may be conformed to such determination.

Presuming that the Vice-President will have left the seat of government for Boston, I have not requested his opinion to be taken on the supposed emergency; should it be otherwise I wish him also to be consulted. I am etc.⁵⁰

50. From the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

***To THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

Richmond, April 13, 1791.

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Dear Sir: Your letter of the 2d. came to my hands at this place. Part of it did as you supposed and might well suppose, astonished [*sic*] me exceedingly. I think it not only right that Mr. Carmichael should be furnished with a copy of the genuine letters to Mr. G. Morris, but that Mr. [Morris] should also know the result of his conferences with the Duke of Leeds⁶⁰ at the Court of Madrid. The contents of my official letters to him you are acquainted with; my private ones were few, and nothing in any of them relative England or Spain; how it comes to pass therefore that such interpretations as the extracts recite, should be given, he best can account for.

Being hurried, I shall only add that I shall proceed on my journey tomorrow, and from good information have a dreary one before me in some parts thereof. Yrs. etc.

P.S. The footing upon which you have placed Mr. Carmichael is good.⁶¹

60. Count Florida Blanca is meant. The several pen inadvertencies in this letter is evidence of the hurry with which it was written.

61. From the original in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

On April 14 Washington received and answered an address from the mayor, recorder, aldermen, and common council of Petersburg. Both address and answer are recorded in the "Letter Book" in the *Washington Papers*.

To THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mount Vernon, June 15, 1791.

Sir: I acknowledged the receipt of your letter of the 2nd. of April from Richmond; since which I have only received two letters from you of the 10th. of April and 15th. of May.

Concluding that some of your dispatches may have been forwarded to Taylor's ferry (by which route I did not return) I have to request, if that should have been the case, and the

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communications were of a particular or pressing nature, that duplicates may be addressed to me at Mount-Vernon, where I shall remain until the 27th. of the present month, when, by an appointment before I went to the southward, I am to meet the Commissioners at Georgetown.

I cannot now determine how long I may be there, but it is probable I shall not make any particular communications to you before my return to Philadelphia.

If the suggestion contained in your letter of the 10th. of April, respecting the engravings, can be carried into effect at a moderate expence, I think it may answer a good purpose.⁸² I am etc.

A letter from Major Shaw,⁸³ Consul at Canton, of the 7th. of December last, with it's enclosures, and a very unexpected address from some Persons styling themselves, "free People of colour of the Island of Grenada," are herewith transmitted for your consideration, and your opinions thereon when I see you in Philadelphia.⁸⁴

82. Jefferson had written (April 10): "While in Europe I selected about a dozen or two of the handsomest fronts of private buildings of which I have the plates. perhaps it might decide the taste of the new town, were these to be engraved here, and distributed grafts among the inhabitants of Georgetown. the expence would be trading." From a press copy in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

83. Samuel Shaw.

84. In the writing of William Jackson in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

To THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mount Vernon, June 17, 1791.

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Sir: By the last post from the southward I received your letters of the 17th. and 24th. of April, with their enclosures.

In a letter of the 7th. of May, which I wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury from Charleston, I expressed my approbation of what he informed me had been determined by the Vice-President and the Heads of Departments, relative to Mr. Short's negotiation at Amsterdam, and the further progress of the loans in Holland. I am etc.⁹³

93. In the writing of William Jackson in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

***To THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

Philadelphia, July 30, 1791.

Sir: I have given your letter to Mr. Short, dated the 28th. instr. an attentive perusal. As you place confidence in his judgment and discretion, I think it is very proper that the sentiments which are expressed in the cyphered part of it, should be handed to him;³² and approve the communicating of them to him accordingly.³³

32. A press copy of Jefferson's letter to William Short is in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress. The ciphered portion assures Short that the United States has no design of conquest against the West Indies, and discusses at length the prohibitions of commerce against the United States that exist in those islands.

33. From the "Letter Book" copy in the *Washington Papers*.

***To THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

December 11, 1790.

Dear Sir: Herewith you will receive the Powers and Instructions with which Gouver. Morris Esqr. is invested, and his Communications consequent thereof. You will give them the

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consideration their importance merit, and report your opinion of the measures proper to be taken thereupon.

The following extract from one of my *private* letters to Mr. Morris contain all the Notice I have *yet* taken of his public communications. I give it that you may have the whole matter before you....⁹⁵

95. The omitted portion is the same down to "I shall write to you more fully on that head" as that in Washington's letter to Gouverneur Morris, July 7, 1790, *q. v.* From the original in the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.

***To THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

March 19, 1791.

The President concurs with the Secretary of State in opinion that, circumstances make it advisable to commit to Mr. Short and the Marqs. de la Fayette to press in a discreet manner, our settlement with the Court of Spain on a broader bottom than merely that of the case of St. Marie, and authorises him to take measures accordingly.⁴

4. From the *Jefferson Papers* in the Library of Congress.